
**Higher Education & Workforce
Education Committee**

HB 2867

Brief Description: Regarding expansion of WSU Tri-Cities into a four-year institution.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Haler, Grant, Hankins, Cox, Sells, Roberts, Fromhold, Armstrong, Walsh, Skinner and Newhouse.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities to expand into a four-year institution by admitting, beginning in the fall of 2007, lower-division students directly into programs beyond the biotechnology field.
- Directs WSU Tri-Cities to prepare a plan for expanding into a four-year institution and how best to use the resources and talents available in the Tri-Cities region to meet areas of need in higher education in southeastern Washington.

Hearing Date: 1/24/06

Staff: Sarah Ream (786-7303).

Background:

In 1989, the Legislature established five branch campuses in growing urban areas, to be operated by the state's two public research universities. The branch campuses included Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities. The campuses were authorized to offer only upper-division and graduate education programs, in collaboration with local community and technical colleges which offered lower-division course work to prepare students for transfer. The mission of the branch campuses, as established by statute, is to expand access to higher education and contribute to regional economic development through collaboration with community and technical colleges.

In 2005, the Legislature directed WSU Tri-Cities to expand its upper division capacity for transfer students and its graduate capacity and programs, while continuing to provide innovative coadmission and coenrollment options with Columbia Basin College. The Legislature also authorized WSU Tri-Cities, beginning in the fall of 2006, to begin offering lower-division courses linked to specific majors in fields not addressed by the local community colleges.

Additionally, the 2005 legislation authorized WSU-Tri-Cities to develop a bachelor's degree program in biotechnology, and to admit freshman and sophomores to that program directly (as

opposed to through coadmission or coenrollment agreements with community colleges). The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) must approve the biotechnology program before WSU Tri-Cities may provide it. To date, WSU Tri-Cities has not requested the HECB's approval of such a program.

Summary of Bill:

Washington State University Tri-Cities is directed to conduct a study, including examining resources available at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and develop a plan regarding: (1) areas of need in higher education that exist in southeastern Washington, and (2) how WSU-Tri-Cities may best develop into a four-year institution. Washington State University Tri-Cities must submit its plan to the Legislature by November 30, 2006.

Beginning in the fall of 2007, WSU Tri-Cities may admit lower-division students directly into programs beyond the biotechnology field that were identified in the campus' plan as being of high need in southeastern Washington. Any new programs must be approved by the HECB. By adding new programs and admitting lower division students, WSU Tri-Cities shall develop into a four-year institution.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2006.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.